

Sparkling Waves

Reminiscences about
Mananeeya Eknathji Ranade-4

A. BALAKRISHNAN

During the training of 1st batch of Life-workers of Vivekananda Kendra, in 1973, Eknathji had made necessary arrangements for the classes of the trainees on various topics during his absence on tour by eminent persons. He had done this after thorough planning, so that the trainees did not feel his absence and at the same time eminent scholars who were invited to Kanyakumari were able to utilize their time fully for the benefit of the trainees. Those whom Eknathji had invited were Swami Janardhan Maharaj, Dr. S.B. Varnekar, Prof. Athavle, Pandit Ramnarayan Shastri, Dr. Mukul Batra, Swami Chidanandaji, Swami Chidbhavanandaji, Swami Ranganathanandaji, Shri Devendraswaroopji, Shri Suresh Ketkarji, Shri Ram Sathe and Smt. Toyajakshi Devendra. All these personalities stayed at the

training centre and had extensive interaction with the trainees, during the question - answer sessions, after their lectures on various topics as decided by Eknathji in consultation with the speakers.

There were also prominent visitors to Vivekanandapuram during the period of our training. Some of them were Swami Chinmayanadaji, Sri Moropant Pingleji, Shri Dada Saheb Apte, Prof. Sisir Kumar Mitra, Shri Kedar Nath Sahniji and Shri K.A.A. Raja.

Soon after his return from the tour, Eknathji always made it a point to review the programmes and activities undertaken by the trainees during his absence. In those interactions (with Eknathji), each trainee had to narrate his experience and read out the notes he had made in his diary. He was also very keen to know what the trainees gained from

the lectures by various scholars and eminent visitors. Sometime, these stocktaking sessions ran to 3-4 hours.

An interaction with Eknathji in one such session was memorable. It was some time in the month of September or October 1973. Swami Chidanandaji had come and stayed for a week and delivered a number of lectures and conducted Bhajan session, Antaryoga, etc. Eknathji returned to Kanyakumari a day prior to Swamiji's departure. As usual, he had a long sitting with the trainees in the presence of Swami Chidanandaji. Swamiji briefed Eknathji how he conducted his classes, Bhajan session, meditation, Antaryoga etc. to the trainees and how they felt the spiritual vibration throughout the day. He said that the trainees were showing keen interest in meditation and japa and they should be further groomed in that line for the inner unfoldment.

I observed Eknathji carefully listening to Swamiji's narration. At the end, he made a very clear and significant remark: "Swamiji, I am very thankful to you for giving the trainees glimpses of Spiritual life. I could see them all floating in the spiritual world. Their feet

are above the ground. Now I have to bring them down to their former ground".



Next morning, Swami Chidanandaji left Kanyakumari. That day afternoon, Eknathji took a class for all the trainees. Normally he used to take classes in the forenoon, but from that day he changed over to afternoon. He started his talk about the experiences during his recent visit to Calcutta. He said he spoke to many of his friends and well-wishers about the training that was being given to Life-workers and how henceforth such workers would come out, batch after batch, after their 6 months training, and these workers would flood with Swami Vivekananda's

message every nook and corner of the country, nay, even the distant areas of the globe. Then he quoted Swamiji-

“Shall India die? Then from the world all spirituality will be extinct, all moral perfection will be extinct, all sweet-souled sympathy for religion will be extinct, all ideality will be extinct and in its place will reign the duality of lust and luxury as the male and female deities, with money as its priest, fraud, force, and competition its ceremonies, and the human soul its sacrifice. Such a thing can never be.”



He, therefore said, “Bharat is the only Spiritual Light House to give direction to all the countries of the world, which are moving in the vast ocean like rudderless ships. Only those young men and women, who have strong body, stable mind and sharp intellect can achieve this. We need vibrant, dynamic and committed workers whose feet are firmly held on the ground. The trainee Life-workers should not get engaged too much in meditation and spiritual practices. They should be prepared to take up any type of

physical work and move to any part of the country at short notice. One cannot be called spiritual if he merely engaged himself in meditation and spiritual practices, totally oblivious of the condition of the suffering millions all over the country. For us, spirituality means, wiping out the tears of the fallen and the downtrodden, providing succour to the sick and feeble. We are therefore here to keep our eyes and ears wide open and not to keep them

closed and sit in meditation. Our hands and legs are always put to action and not to sit cross-legged for hours. A true worker would and should like to die while engaged in work. Such a worker is a missionary. I have brought all of you here to become missionaries. Therefore this is not the place for engaging oneself in too much spiritual practice. If you want to do that, you have chosen the wrong place. It is not too late for you to leave this place. I hope you understand the seriousness of my frank talk.”

[To be continued]

Organization and Yourself

Some members keep their organization strong,
while others join and just belong.
Some dig right in, some serve with pride.
But some go along just for a ride.
Some volunteer to do their share,
while some sit back and just don't care.
On meeting days some always show.
But then there those are who never go.
Some always pay their dues ahead.
Some get behind for months instead.
Some do their best, some build, some make.
Some never give but always take.
Some lag behind, some let things go.
Some never help their organization grow
Some drag, some pull, some don't, some do.
Now decide, which of these are you ?

- Swami Samachittananda

Put yourself to work, and you will find such tremendous power coming to you that you will feel it hard to bear. Even the least work done for others awakens the power within; even thinking the least good of others gradually instills into the heart the strength of a lion.

- Swami Vivekananda

 **The Beautiful Tree** 

EXCERPTS FROM **SHRI DHARAMPAL'S** BOOK, 'THE BEAUTIFUL TREE'. THIS BOOK EXPLAINS ABOUT LEVEL OF EDUCATION DURING PRE-BRITISH INDIA AND THE EFFORTS TAKEN BY THE BRITISH TO DESTROY THE SAME

The number of those attending school was estimated at around 40,000 in 1792 at 674,883 in 1818, and 21,44,377 in 1851. The total number of schools public as well as private in 1801 was stated to be 3,363. By stages it reached a total of 46,114 in 1851.

...The universities of Oxford Cambridge and Edinburgh were perhaps as important for Britain as Taxila and Nalanda were in ancient India; or places like Navadweep were as late as the later part of the 18th century.

....Since many of those who began to come to India from Britain especially after 1773 as travellers, scholars, or judges had their education in one of these three universities;

...These institutions were infact the watering holes of the culture of traditional

communities. Therefore, the term 'school' is a weak translation of the roles these institutions really played in Indian society.

...William Adam in his first report, observed that there exit about 100,000 village schools in Bengal and Bihar around the 1830s.

....Thomas Munro had observed that every village had a school. For areas of the newly extended presidency of Bombay around 1820, senior officials like G.L. Prendergast noted that there is hardly a village, great or small, throughout our territories, in which there is not at least one school, and in larger villages more...

....The men who wrote about India (whether concerning its education or its industry and crafts or the somewhat higher real wages of Indian

agricultural labourers compared to such wages in England) belonged to the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century society of Great Britain. Naturally when they wrote about a school in every village in India – whether that may or may not have been literally true – in contrast to the British situation, it must have appeared to them so....

... S c h o o l attendance, especially in the districts of the Madras presidency, even in the decayed state of the period 1822-25 was proportionately far higher than the numbers in all variety of schools in England in 1800.

....it presents a picture which is in sharp contrast to the various scholarly pronouncements of the past 100 years or more, in which it had been assumed that education of any sort in India, till very recent decades, was mostly limited to the twice born amongst the Hindoos and amongst the Muslims to those from the ruling elite. The actual situation which is revealed was

different, if not quite contrary, for at least amongst the Hindoos, in the districts of the Madras presidency (and dramatically so in the Tamil speaking areas) as well as the two districts of Bihar. It was the groups termed *soodras*, and the castes considered below them who predominated in the thousands of the then still existing schools in practically each of these areas. .

Education is the manifestation of perfection already in man.



...In most other districts where no such institutions were known the collectors reported that such learning – in the Vedas, Sastras, Law, Astronomy, Ganita sastram, Ethics, etc.- was imparted in Agraharams, or usually at home.

...According to other Madras Presidency surveys of those practicing medicine and surgery it was found that such persons belonged to a variety of castes. Amongst them, the barbers, according to British medical men, were the best in surgery...

....Inspite of the controversies which Adam's reports have

given rise to, the most notable one being his mention of there being perhaps 100,000 village schools still existing in Bengal and Bihar in some form till the 1830s.

....First every village had at least one school and in all probability in Bengal and Bihar with 150,748 villages, there will still be 100,000 villages that have these schools. Second on the basis of personal observation and what he had learnt from other evidence, he inferred that on an average there were around 100 institutions of higher learning in each district of Bengal. Consequently, he concluded that the 18 districts of Bengal had about 1800 such institutions. Computing the number studying in these latter at the lowest figure of six scholars in each, he also computed that some 10800 scholars should be studying in them.

....Gandhiji addressed a meeting held in England on 20 October 1931, on the subject of future of education in India .



....Gandhiji's observation on education emphasized two main points : (i) that today India is more illiterate than it was fifty or a hundred years ago; and (ii) that the British administrators', instead of looking after education and other matters which had existed, 'began to root them out. They scratched the soil and began to look at the root, and left the root like that and the beautiful tree perished.'

....Gandhiji had relied on including two articles from young India of December 1920 by Dault Ram Gupta : (i) The decline of Mass Education in India; and (ii) How Indian Education was crushed in the Punjab.

...In 1822-25 the number of those in ordinary schools was put at over 150,000 in the Madras presidency.

....Modern Indians tend to quote foreigners in most matters reflecting on India's present, or its past. One school of thought uses all such foreign backing to show India's primitiveness the barbaric uncouth and what is termed

'parochial' nature of the customs and manners of its people and the ignorance oppressions and poverty which Indians are said to have always suffered from. To them India for most of its past had lived at what is termed the 'feudal' stage or what in more recent Marxist terminology is called the 'system of Asiatic social organisms'. Yet to another school India had always been a glorious land with minor blemishes, or accidents of history here and there all in all remaining a land of 'Dharmic' and benevolent rules. For yet other subscribing to the observations of the much quoted Charles Metcalfe and Henry Maine it has mostly been a happy land of village republics.

....T.B.Macaulay expressed similar views, merely using different imagery. He commented that the totality of Indian knowledge and

scholarship did not even equal the contents of a single shelf of a good European library; and that all the historical information contained in books written in Sanskrit was less valuable than what may be found in the most paltry abridgement used at preparatory schools in England.

...“In truth the Hindoo, like the enunch, excels in the qualities of a slave. Furthermore, similar to the Chinese, the Hindoos were 'dissembling treacherous mendacious, to an excess which surpasses even the usual measure of uncultivated society.' Both the Chinese and the Hindoos were 'disposed to excessive exaggeration with regard to everything relating to themselves. 'Both were cowardly and unfeeling. Both were in the highest degree conceited of themselves and full of affected contempt for others. And above all both were in physical sense, disgustingly unclean in their persons and house...' says Macaulay.



ÁkFkuk INVOCATION

Jh jk?koa n'kjFkkPeteÁes;e~ A
lhrki fre~] j?kqdykUo; jRunhie~ AA
vktkuqckgqe~] vjfoan nyk;nk{ke~ A
jkea fu'kqj fouk'kdja uekfe AA

Sree Raaghavam Dasarathaatmajamaprameyam
Sitaapatim, Raghukulaanvaya Ratnadeepam
Aajaanubaahum Aravinda Dalaayadaaksham
Raamam Nishachara Vinashakaram Namami.

*Salutations to Sri Rama, the son of
Dasaratha, the lord of Sita, the
brilliant light of King Raghu's clan,
who is long armed, lotus eyed and
who eliminates the demons.*

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*Truth is purity. Truth is all knowledge. Truth must be strengthening,
mut be enlightening, must be invigorating.*

- Swami Vivekananda

ARISE, AWAKE.....

DR. K. SUBRAHMANYAM

Swami Vivekananda exhorts all not only to wake up but to keep awake always. We have to be for ever alert to be established in success. Victory and wakefulness go together. Sleep and slumber, nay even a nap for a short while may cause failure and fall. By slipping into sleep, we may slip into losses and adversities, defects and disappointments, distress and destruction. Therefore we cannot rest at the cost of wakefulness or cautiousness. Heart cannot rest. If it rests it is death. So also the pulse or breath is not to stop, but to function always. The man on the roller has to be on toes always. He cannot afford to rest lest he should slip and fall, fall into hell or failure, sin or suffering, despair or death.

At the physical level we cannot afford to neglect the body. To keep it fit we are ever to be alert in the day's habits. Routine requires strict observance. Neither the diet nor the daily exercises can be ignored. Methodical adherence

to healthy habits implies physical culture.

At the intellectual level too, we are ever to remain alert lest we should forget or lose what has hitherto been acquired. The pursuit of knowledge should never cease. Nor should we stop intellectual exercises. We strive to deserve what we desire to be successful emotionally also.

At the spiritual level, it is tapas to remain one with the self or Atman. Nandi in the temple of Siva looks incessantly at the deity. The jiva has always to be engaged in tapas to be one with Siva or the Self. Similarly, Siva too cannot afford to sleep. He is ever alert to be Himself always in tapas.

Swami Chidbhavanandaji asked Sri Ramana "Sir, what is the difference between your present spiritual position and the same when you were at the age of sixteen after the death experience?" Sri Ramana is reported to have replied: "What I caught hold of then, I continue to hold even now." And that is

to keep oneself ever awake. To be ever wakeful is to be ever successful. To succeed is one and to sustain the success is another. It is not enough if we achieve something, we have to maintain the achievement.

In Mythology we find Brahma with four faces always engaged in reciting the Vedas. He cannot afford to cease the recitation. He is expected to keep himself ever wakeful reading the Vedas. In other words he is expected to hold on to what he is in possession of. As a miser clings to his gold, as a child to the mother, as a wife to the husband, a scholar to the books and as a devotee to the deity ceaselessly should an aspirant hold on to the ideal. To miss the mark is to lose the track. Brahma the studious scholar of the Vedas has one day, unfortunately, slipped into a short nap. Asuras however were waiting for this opportunity. And the moment of Brahma's slip was seized, the Vedas were stolen. Brahma woke up to find the loss of his treasure. He suddenly became bankrupt. All his wealth of knowledge was lost in a trice for want of his alertness. He fell

prostrate at the feet of Vishnu seeking His intervention. Now it is Lord Vishnu's mission to restore the wealth to its rightful owner. He therefore transformed himself into a fish to catch the thief who has run away with the booty to the bottom of the sea. After a long search the Lord in the form of fish caught hold of the culprit. A battle ensued between the deity and the devil and the demoniac thief was done to



death. The Vedas were restored to Brahma.

The symbolic significance of the mythological story is profound. Not for nothing has the Lord chosen the form of a fish. All efforts to achieve the chosen goal lies in the aspirant's alertness and

wakefulness. The fish never closes its eyes. It has no lids to close its eyes. Fish is symbolic of wakefulness, alertness, agility, smartness and ability to swim against the current. Against all odds, one may have to strive to reach the goal, to realize the ideal, to deserve the fulfillment of desires.

Masters, mothers and God offer protection and guidance by means of look, touch and thought. Sri Ramakrishna touched Narendranath and thereby offered protection and guidance. He had also transferred his energies to the disciple by just touching. With the right hand of benediction, the gods offer and transfer fearlessness to the devotees. The mother by the warmth of her energizing embrace offers security and guidance to the children. By constantly thinking of the disciples, devotees and the children, masters, god and mothers offer their guidance. Holy mother Sarada Devi's thought-power provided Swami Vivekananda with the required protection and guidance while he was in the west. Mother's affectionate blessings are the sure source of security to the children wherever they are. The whole cosmos is being looked after by

the Lord's grace. In addition to the thought and touch of protection is the look, affectionate looks of Gods, masters and mothers that can surely offer us the required guidance and welfare. Mother's eyes are always on the crawling baby. God's eyes are always on the well-being of the cosmos.



Masters keep their watchful eyes always open to guide and bring up their disciples on right lines. The fish brings up the small ones by constantly looking at them. In its gaze do the small ones learn to live and swim in water symbolic of grace by looks.

Goddess Meenakshi is called the deity of fish like eyes. Meena is fish; Aksha is eye. She

is Meenakshi, since her eyes are like those of a fish. Her eyes are not only beautiful but graceful with the abundance of affection and compassion spontaneously and incessantly flowing towards the devotees.

In the form of a fish, Lord Vishnu came to propagate the value of grace by gazing, of love by looks and of success by wakefulness.

The very first step to any pursuit is one's ability to keep oneself awake to seize the opportunities and to be alert enough so that no opportunities are ever missed. Brahma in mythology has not been alert enough to hold his wealth in the tight grip. The

demon perhaps, is more alert to seize the opportunity when there is little or no alertness on the part of Brahma. We have to remain alert in our interest.

Swami Vivekananda's exhortation 'arise and awake' is the very life-spirit of the first form of all incarnations. The fish conveys that it is ever alert. And its alertness is not for its self protection, but to shower love on the small ones. Lord Vishnu is the God of compassion and grace. He showers love incessantly and justly.

An aspirant's alertness and wakefulness are not meant merely for a selfish rise but for the welfare of all around.

It has been one of the principles of my life not to be ashamed of my own ancestors. I am one of the proudest men ever born, but let me tell you frankly, it is not for myself, but on account of my ancestry. The more I have studied the past, the more I have looked back, more and more has this pride come to me, and it has given me the strength and courage of conviction, raised me up from the dust of the earth, and set me working out that great plan laid out by those great ancestors of ours.

- Swami Vivekananda

HISTORY OF AYODHYA

Ayodhya was the capital of Kosalas where ruled the kings of the illustrious Solar race. Manu was the first king and the founder of Ayodhya. Historians agree generally that Manu ruled in about 3100 B.C.

Manu was succeeded by Ikshvaku and he in turn by Vikukshi. Ikshvaku's son Nimi founded Videha and Danda established Dandaka.

Ayodhya is on the banks of the Sarayu River, which arises from Kumayun. After twenty generations from Manu Mandhata ruled Ayodhya. Famous Harischandra known for the honesty tests put by Viswamitra was a successor of Mandhata.

Harischandras's sixth successor was Sagara. Sagara was succeeded by Bhagiratha who constructed a network of canals and brought the Ganga down from the Himalayas. Another famous king of the Solar Dynasty was Dilip. His son was Raghu. Rama's Dynasty was named

Raghuvamsh after him. Raghu had two sons, Aja and Dasaratha.

Dasaratha had four sons, Rama, Lakshmana, Bharata and Satrugna. Rama was the 65th descendant of Manu. Rama divided his Kingdom among his sons and nephews. Kusa succeeded Rama in Ayodhya. Lava was given Uttarakosala with Sravasti as the capital.

When the Mahabharata war was fought in 1400 B.C 30th generation of Sri Rama, Brihadbahu was ruling Ayodhya. He was killed by Abhimanyu, son of Arjuna. Siddhartha, who later became Gautama Buddha took birth in the Solar race in the 25th generation from Brihadbahu.

Ayodhya was one of the seven sacred cities. Others were Mathura, Haridwar, Kasi, Kanchi, Ujjain and Dwaraka. Hiuen Tsang who visited India wrote that there were 20 Buddhist monasteries in Ayodhya and nearly 3000 students lived in a monastery. It was a holy place for Jains too.

Fa-Hien who visited India before Hiuen Tsang also has written about Ayodhya.

The place where Ramachandra was born was called Janmasthan. King Vikramaditya built a temple here in the 12th century A.D. This temple was destroyed by Babur who established the Mogul Dynasty in India in 1526-1530 A.D. He built a mosque there. It was called Babri Masjid.

In the Mogul period, from Babur to Aurangzeb, from 1526 to 1707, a period of 181 years, nearly 45 wars were fought to capture the Janmasthan and reconstruct the temple. The attempts did not become successful.

Janmasthan is now known as Ram Janmabhoomi. The Ayodhya problem is well known. Now efforts are on to find a solution acceptable to all.



Two kinds of men do not worship God as man –the human brute who has no religion, and the Paramahansa who has risen beyond all the weaknesses of humanity and has transcended all limits of his own human nature. To him all nature has become his own Self. He alone can worship God as He is. Here too, as in other cases, the two extremes meet. The extreme of ignorance and the other extreme of knowledge –neither of these go through acts of worship. The human brutes do not worship because of his ignorance, and the Jivanmuktas (free souls) do not worship because they have realized God in themselves. Being between these two poles of existence, if any one tells you that he is not going to worship God as man, take kindly care of that man; he is, not to use any harsher term, an irresponsible talker; his religion is for unsound and empty brains.

Swami Vivekananda

LESSONS OF DEVOTION

CH. SATYANARAYANA MURTHY

Kalindi

Kalindi was the daughter of Surya. Her heart's desire was to wed Lord Krishna. She performed tapas for the fulfillment of her desire. Her resolve was to die, in case Krishna were to refuse her hand. Like Rukmini she too wished ardently to worship the feet of the Lord and win his

Bhakti (devotion). One day Lord Krishna and Arjuna went to the forest for hunting. After hunting a great deal, they sat for a respite in a picturesque spot on the bank of the river Yamuna. There they espied a lovely girl loitering alone. They felt that she was walking gracefully towards them. Sri Krishna sent Arjuna to her to know the details about her.



heart. She was looking forward to the day when the Lord would deign to recognise her devotion and take her into his arms.

Lord Krishna was with the Pandavas looking after their interests, overpowered by their

To Arjuna, the pious and faithful girl with no guile or wile confided her love to Lord Krishna and said that she was on the look out for him. Arjuna gently and courteously disclosed to her his identity and that of Krishna and led her to him. Krishna cast amorous glances at her and caused a beautiful blush suffuse her face. She fell at the feet of Lord Krishna and washed his feet with her tears of joy. Lord Krishna lovingly lifted her and assured her of his love for her. He took her into his chariot and along with Arjuna reached the palace of Dharmaraja.

There Draupadi welcomed the lovely bride in all affection and honour and celebrated her advent in all pomp and splendour. Kalindi spent a happy time in the company of Draupadi in the palace of the Pandavas till Krishna became free to return to Dwaraka.

Krishna took Kalindi to Dwaraka and there their marriage was solemnized with Vedic rites. The wonder was it was not looked upon as another instance of Krishna's routine marriages. It was a superb one with new grace and unprecedented charm. Routine could never stale the infinite variety of festivities and ineffable joy the devotees derived as they watched the celebrations.

MITRAVINDA

Mitravinda was the daughter of the king of Avanti. Her mother Rajadhidevi was Krishna's aunt. From her very infancy, Mitravinda had come to admire the heroic deeds of her "Bava" Krishna. She was lost in the admiration and adoration of Lord Krishna. As she grew in age, her admiration flowered into love and she made up her mind to choose

Krishna in the "Swayamvara" arranged by her elders.

The brothers of Mitravinda, Vinda and Anuvinda by name were the friends of Duryodhana. They had on them the evil influence of Duryodhana. So they developed hatred towards Krishna and opposed the choice of their sister. Hence Mitravinda ardently prayed to the Lord to rescue her from the vicious whirlpool of palace politics. There was no way out for her from the hell of a palace governed by her unworthy brothers.

Lord Krishna heard her devout prayers and decided to make her his own. Lord Krishna went to the "Swayamvara" in his glorious chariot and carried off the bride Mitravinda just as he did with Rukmini earlier. Her brother Vinda and Anuvinda and a host of other princes assembled there were simply helpless spectators, as Lord Krishna drove off with the lovely girl Mitravinda. Every miraculous feat of Krishna left a golden line of beneficiaries as well as trail of killed or subdued or reformed or reclaimed erstwhile evil doers. The beneficiaries were the erstwhile

victims of the evil forces and the viewers of the festivities and celebration of his marriages. With their hearts throbbing with joy and pride, the citizens of Dwaraka participated in the joyous celebrations of the marriage of Krishna with his cousin Mitravinda.

BHADRA

Shrutakirti was Vasudeva's sister. Bhadra was Shrutakirti's daughter. She was the princess of Kekeya. Bhadra was attracted by the beauty and charming traits of Lord Krishna.

Her being's end and aim was to attain the bliss of union with Lord Krishna in marriage. Moreover Krishna stood in the relationship of "Bava" to her and hence she could claim him as her bride-groom. The

brothers of Bhadra the foremost of whom was Santardana were not averse to her choice of Krishna. They were also devotees of Lord Krishna. They were happy that their sister chose a worthy hero.

Hence they approached Lord Krishna and humbly prayed to him to accept the hand of their sister who had dedicated herself to him in all love and devotion. Lord Krishna who knew the heart of Bhadra accepted the offer. He married Bhadra scrupulously observing the Vedic rites.

To the spectators bubbling with evergrowing enthusiasm and devotional fervour, the festivities and celebrations in connection with Bhadra's marriage with Krishna appeared to outdo the previous ones in glee.



HOME IS BEST

SUBRAMANI

The Jasmines in my garden have no smell," expounds the common human nature of trivializing things at hand, or a place one lives at. Human mind gets quickly accustomed to things and people, and fails to find values in them. The farther a man is from, the wiser he is, or the more remote a place, the more ideal it is, seems to be the measure of worth of things and people.

Perhaps this happens only to those who are attracted by the lifestyle some where and want to copy it neglecting their own as obsolete, not to Triplicanites. They have made Gandhiji's concept of acceptance that, "I throw my windows and doors open so that air enter from all sides, but I refuse to be blown off."

Dish antenna and Internet have failed to shake the foundation of culture laid centuries back though they handle electronics as easily as the Vishnu Sahasranama and

the Gayatri Mantra. So as Swami Vivekananda said, if Manu comes back today and takes a walk in Triplicane, he will not be disappointed. The same mantras, the same chants and the same toll of temple bells will receive him.

Holiness is associated with the name of the place. "Triplicane," is derived from the Tamil word Tiru-alli-keni, which means tank of sacred lilly plants. The tank referred to is the one in front of the Parthasarathy temple, which is one of the oldest in Chennai. The cultural life here is centered around this temple. It abounds in historical events, legends, and association with great men.

The temple's history goes that it was built by the kings of the Pallava Dynasty in the early 8th century. The kings of the Pandya and Chola Dynasties took renovation and expansion works. Major rebuilding to its present size was done by the Vijayanagara Kings in the 16th century.

Lord Krishna as the charioteer of Arjuna in the Mahabharata war is the deity of the temple. Here, Krishna is shown as wounded in the battle. Curious enough, he sprouts a moustache and has a conch in one hand. In the Sanctum, one can also find the idols of Rukmini, Balarama, Satyaki, Aniruddha and Pradyumna. The extreme devotion of the people towards the deity has given Triplicane the name Southern Vrindavan.

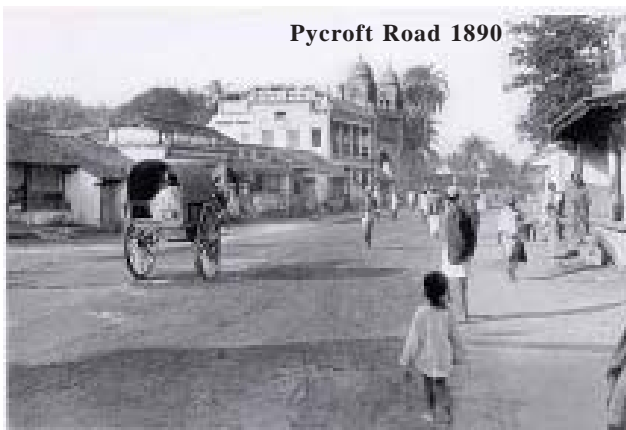
The temple has many rarities. First it is a twin temple with two Sanctums, one dedicated to Lord Parthasarathy facing the east and the other dedicated to Lord Narasimha facing the west. So the annual festival called Brahmostavam which extends for ten days is conducted twice, once in Chitra (April-May) and again in Ani (June-July).

The temple Gopuram is so exquisite and intricate in carving that Tirumangai Alwar praised it

in ten meaningful verses. It has been the custom to chant 4000 hymns of Alvars in the temple since centuries and the tradition is maintained till today.

The temple figures prominently in the colonial history of India. France occupied Santhome, a place near the temple in 1672. Then Muslims took shelter in the temple. The French drove them out and converted it into a garrison.

A recital of devotional songs on the day of Vaikunta Ekadasi, a tradition set by Saint Thyagaraja during his pilgrimage in 1845 is held every year under the title 'Ekantha Sevai.'



Pycroft Road 1890

Triplicane is associated with many world-renowned men. Srinivasa Ramanujam, Mathematical scientist, born in Kumbakonam, shifted to Triplicane in 1909 and lived at Thoppu Street till March 1914. From here he left for England for research.

Nobel Laureate Chandrasekhar studied in the Hindu High School situated at Big Street. He was awarded Nobel Prize for Physics in 1930 for the Chandrashekhar Limit, which determines the minimum mass of a dying star enabling it to survive. Sir C.V. Raman, Nobel Prize winner for Physics in 1930 married from Triplicane.

The one time famous University of Madras, which is housed in the palace built by the Nawab of Arcot is situated here. It was the only source of higher education in South India during the British period.

At the Marina Beach is the Vivekananda Illam formerly known as Ice House. The first branch of the Ramakrishna Mission, Calcutta was started here. Swami Vivekananda, on his return from abroad in 1897, stayed here from 6th to 15th February. Now a property of

Ramakrishna Mission, it lodges an exhibition on the life of Swamiji and Cultural Heritage of India. The room on the second floor of the building where Swamiji stayed is a meditation hall radiating the serenity of his visit.

In front of the Illam lies the vast Marina Beach, the second largest in the world. Surged everyday evening by strollers it is a haven of electioneers and revellers on special occasions. Tilak Ghat, now renamed as Seerani Arangam stands witness to the speeches of Jawaharlal Nehru, Anna Durai, Rajiv Gandhi and Atal Bihari Vajpayee.

Famous nationalist Tamil Poet, Subramania Bharati known as the father of modern Tamil settled in Triplicane in the later part of his life. He was born in Ettayapuram in Tirunelveli. "Bharati" was a title conferred on C. Subramanyam by the Raja for his literary abilities at a very young age. Later he excelled in Journalism. An extremist in ideas he joined the struggle for freedom. A few years after he abjured all such ideas and gave Indian Nationalism a spiritual turn.

History of Triplicane is not complete without the story of Alasinga Perumal. His full name was Mandayam Chakravarthi Alasinga Perumal. He was the Headmaster of Pachaiyappa's High School. He met Swami Vivekananda in 1893 when he reached Madras after his historic meditation at Kanyakumari. He became his disciple.

In the subsequent discussions, Swamiji decided to go to Chicago, to attend the Parliament of Religions provided

money be collected from the middle class only. He wrote many letters to Alasinga from abroad. One letter referring to the Parthasarathy temple can be seen inscribed on a slab of the temple even today.

A few yards to the North of the temple is situated Vivekananda Kendra. The street is named after Rao

Bahadur M.A. Singarachariar, one of the founders of the Hindu High School.

Always soothed by the cool sea breeze and flanked by busy streets far away, Triplicane at times creates the ambience of a village. Butterflies flit and fly here in the morning and if you filter away the sounds of vehicles, you can hear the



Marina beach 1890

twitter of many birds. But just walk a few yards, you are in a wonderland of markets. This microcosm of the world provides all necessities, luxuries and opportunities at a hand's stretch. Reminiscences which sneak in on their own will make a Triplicanite taking a stroll in a city anywhere in the world feel :

"East or west home is best."

APRIL FOOL!

APRIL FOOL! This hilarious cry of your closest ones perhaps has already tricked you on the 1st of this month and also perhaps you are reminiscing on the amusing memory of a harmless non-holiday frolic. Or, are you repenting your weakness for your favourite dish on that day when someone badly ensnared you in a hotel and how it told heavily on your pockets? If so he has broken the rule and killed the charm of the game.

On the other hand, knowing the risk of the day, you were wise enough to be preventive, then not only that you have lost the fun of the day but also have proved Mark Twain's famous saying, "The first of April is the day we remember what we are the other 364 days of the year" true. If some one took the day formally and presented a bouquet of roses to his loved one or gracefully extended a cutely packed set of gifts, he is sure to walk single the whole life and may even get referred to a doctor of a type of patients. Say "your shoes are dirty" (when they are shinning)

as they do in Europe or say "A crow has soiled your backside" (when the suit is spanking new). If you have been elaborate as setting the clocks wrongly or sprucely putting last year's newspaper of April 1st on the table don't be late to yell "April Fool! April Fool!". It is a "for-fun-only" observance and to fully enjoy it be among your intimates because the saying "one who does not laugh seeing you fall is not a friend" can be proved only on that day.

It is the age of play and learn. It is likely that someone will trick you asking a question. So here is the question with the answer.

When was the 1st April Fool Day? Perhaps no one knows. Some say 1st April

1582. According to the Julian calendar April 1st was the New Year Day. When Gregorian calendar was introduced it was moved to 1st January. As running errands was the only



way of communication, people in interior parts did not come to know the change and continued to celebrate April 1st as the New Year Day. They became fools. Also it used to happen that some one rushed



in and pretended as if breaking a serious news to a curious crowd listening frightfully, but callously added "of course, it happened a year back" at the end making the whole situation humorous. When it happened often a day was kept for it so that they could be serious on other days.

So the world has 364 serious days in a year. Or, do

you feel it is otherwise around where you are?

We hear students teasing teachers, policemen humming on duty and see photos of ministers sleeping in public functions. See the grin of the visiting dignitary at an accident sight or when sitting in a discussion room to decide whether there should be a war or not. Also see how full mouthed the smile on the faces of the dignitaries on the stage is, when a doctorate is conferred on an illiterate crowd-puller. They are not to blame, they have to come up to the occasion. Plotting, turning the table, leg-pulling, goading and such games amusing people at all levels every day may be the reason that the April Fool Day goes unnoticed.

If we play a game of counting the days with those who need the April Fool Day, they of their serious days and we of our funny ones, we will either strike an exact balance or exceed them by one count. If anyone on this side fancied to look for a day of the opponnets' type in his list he can be given the Wise Man of the Day award.



HAPPY NEW YEAR!

Happy New Year! On the 14th of April i.e the 1st of Chaitra or the 1st of Chitirai all over India this greeting is given and taken.

Perhaps Indians were the first to make the calendar and Egyptians and Romans adopted it from us. The reason to believe so is that there was a time when their New Year, as was in India, began in April. Romans under Julius Caesar went in war against Egyptians. He adopted the calendar he saw with them in 48 BC and made it effective in Rome. Pope Gregory modified this calendar in 17th century and as Christian celebrations like Easter, Good Friday and Lent came in March, he shifted the New Year to January.

In the Hindu tradition there are two systems on which the

calendar is based. They are the calendar based on the Sun's movement (Souramana) and that based on the Moon's digits (Chandramana). The two system do not differ much. So it is New Year festive in April.

Chandramana

The Lunar calendar begins New Year in the third week of March. The moon takes 28 days to complete its waxing and waning phases. The names of the months according to this calendar are (1) *Chaitra*, (2) *Vaisakha*, (3) *Jyeshtha*, (4) *Ashada*, (5) *Sravana*, (6) *Bhadrapada*, (7) *Aswina*, (8) *Kartika*, (9) *Margasirsa*, (10) *Pausha*, (11) *Magha*, (12) *Phalguna*.

In Tamil it is called Varushapirapu, in Kerala Vishu, in Karnataka Yugadi, in Andhra Ugadi and in Assam Bihu. Punjab celebrates Baisakhi on this day.

Days become warmer in April and a flurry of activities begin in nature. A lucky shower wets the ground in some regions. Trees looking bald in

winter sprout leaves and plants bloom into flowers. Migratory birds return and make nests, ants dig holes and termites build uphill. Warps and honey-bees make hives. Sleeping reptiles wake up and begin life process. Supportive of all these goes the commonly believed legend that Bramha created the world on the 1st day

of Chaitra, i.e 14th April and since has been watching the activities with eyes on all four sides. So the name Yugadi or Ugadi.

The way of celebration also is common to all states. Houses are painted. A “Kani” (auspicious sight), an assembly of things like gold, money, rice, vegetables and clothes which make life rich, offered at the feet of the family deity is viewed and blessings are invoked. Then after a bath Kuthuvillakku (Holy Lamp) is lit and kept near Niraikundam. Children seek blessings of elders and receive tokens as sign of prosperity.

The New Year day of Assam is called Magh Bihu or Bhogali Bihu. Harvest is over and the days forward are days of no want. The Bihu eve is called “Uruka.” The most significant part of Uruka Day is building of “Meji” and feasting at night.

At the day break “Meji,” a tower of firewood is burned. Children going round beating drums singing Bihu songs is a charming scene.

Bengal also celebrates New Year Day on April 14. **This day is celebrated in Punjab as**

Baisakhi. Guru Govind Singh founded Khalsa on this day. The new year in Maharashtra begins on Chaitra Shudha Pratipada which is also called Guhi-Padawa.

One or other festival is held in every state on 14th April. Most striking is the Ker Puja of Tripura, a state tucked in the far away mountains of North-eastern India. Ganga Puja, also held in April has many things in common with other states.

The timing and method of the celebrations prove that people of India are of one race and are bound by a vast culture.

Souramana

The Solar calendar starts the New Year in mid-April. It is based on the Sun’s movement through 12 Rashis (divisions of Zodiac). Each month starts in the middle of the English month. The New Year begins on 14th April. The names of the months in Tamil are as follows. (1) *Chaitra* (2) *Vaikasi* (3) *Ani* (4) *Adi* (5) *Avani* (6) *Purattasi* (7) *Aipasi* (8) *Kartigai* (9)

MEMORIES OF A MASSACRE

A supposition of Bhagat Singh’s imagery of Jalianwala Bagh incident

Namasthe. My dear young friends, wish you a happy New Year and Baisakhi. I am Bhagat Singh. I am here to share my memories about the horrible massacre at Jalianwala Bagh 85 years ago.

I was a boy of thirteen or fourteen years at that time. The first world war had come to an end. Some of the people whom I know participated in the war. But immediately after the war, there were wide spread unemployment and poverty all over the country. The British Government promised to do many things for the people’s welfare after the war. They got our support for the war, but did nothing for our welfare. Instead they started oppressing our people.

The highly talked about Minto-Morley reforms gave some concessions, but repressive acts outweighed those fringe and useless benefits.

All over the town of Amristar, (where I was at that time) the hurried passing of Rowlett Act despite the stiff opposition of Indian leaders in the Central Legislature, was widely talked about and strongly opposed. The act gave more powers to police and administration to imprison any person without trial or conviction.

The Nationalist leaders requested the people to oppose the act through Satyagraha. Gandhiji was arrested and taken to Bombay, when he tried to address a protest meeting here in Punjab. The local leaders like Dr. Saifuddin Kitchlu and Dr. Satya Pal were also arrested. The whole of the country observed April 6 as a day of hartal against this draconian Act.

The British Government was very brutal in oppressing our peaceful demonstrations all over the country. They were

infuriated by the total success of the hartal in Punjab.

Amidst all this turmoil, spring was in full bloom. Amristar was glowing beautifully with the gleaming Golden Temple and the adorning bloom of the yellow flowers. Baisakhi was approaching fast.

Dear friends, we are the people with an amazing culture. We can smile even when adversities are at their peak. That has been the strength of our nation. Everywhere Baisakhi celebration was on and Jalianwala Bagh a beautiful ground in Amristar saw a congregation of more than 10,000 people for Baisakhi celebration from in and around areas.

What thought went into the minds of Lt.Governor O'Dwyer and his General Dyer nobody knows, but their act on that day has defied all cruelties metted out to humanity by the British Government.

When the meeting was on, suddenly General Dyer marched into the ground through the only exit and started firing indiscriminately on the unarmed people.

Hundreds perished in this. Women, children and a thousand men wounded were left unattended. The General stopped the firing only because the ammunition dried up. If he had enough ammunition he would have killed every one there. What a horrible thought and deed.

The news of the massacre started spreading from Amristar. I was one of the young boys to hear about it almost immediately. It was beyond any civilized person's comprehension. I with some of my friends rushed to the Bagh to rescue the remaining people and to carry the wounded to safer places.

What we saw, I cannot recollect without getting my throat choked and tears rolling out of my eyes. The horrible scene was worse than that of a battlefield. To see innocent people killed for no fault of theirs and their sufferings demanded a very strong mind from us. But as young boys, we were not able to digest the massacre. General Dyer, Lt.Governor O'Dwyer appeared as big demons who were to be eliminated. The last hope or faith in the British Justice's fair play was completely shattered.

The Jalianwala Bagh killings stood as a solid proof of Britian's unmindful imperialism not only before us, who visited the Bagh that afternoon, but to everyone in the world.

Our vengeance to avenge the killing grew manifold, when Lt.Governor O'Dwyer was awarded and hailed for his brutal act by his countrymen. My friend Udham Singh was very particular to take revenge for the massacre and he accomplished the same by killing O'Dwyer, though it took 13 years for him to do so and also his own Life.

Friends, remember Jalianwala Bagh was one of the important turning points in our freedom struggle. Our rush to the site on April 13, 1919 produced more number of revolutionaries, who threw the British empire in fix.

Why revolutionary, even Gandhiji lost all limits of toleration and launched the Civil Disobedience Movement, which gradually grew and

culminated in our independence. You all know that I, along with Rajaguru and Shuka Dev threw bombs in the Central Legislature, where the Rowlett Act, the main reason for the massacre was passed. We all tried our best to avenge the massacre at the cost of our lives. Still, the memory of Jalianwala Bagh makes us to shudder.

Of all the negative things in the General's act, his selection of Baisakhi for the gory act has etched the incident permanently in the minds of the public, which has a very short memory. Nay, the incident was a shame on humanity, which can never be forgotten.

My one and only request to you friends, is to remember the sacrifice of the innocent men, women and children amidst your joyous New Year celebration. Rememberance is enough to recognise their sacrifice. May our hard won freedom last long and may our people live in perfect happiness.

Jai Hind.

—Daya



RAMA-THE ENDEARING DEITY

Come April, the warm air, the enthusiastic mood of people, the verdant foliage which will soon dress up the valleys and the work of hardy farmers of readying their cultivable land (of which half country is) to receive the next shower of nature's bounty give the country a different physical setting.

In the foreground to this setting is more than a hundred crore people, ready to brave the scorching heat in the fields yet keep a humble target of a few hundred rupees as monthly reward, satisfied with meager lunches, coarse clothes and simple entertainments, bearing hospitable faces with deep blue placid eyes which indicate that their source of happiness is something subtle far deep in their minds.

To their midst now and then come some extraordinary men. Their source of knowledge is unknown, behaviour baffling and actions intriguing to the theories of Science. One such incident happened in Ayodhya, how many centuries back no one knows. It was the birth of Ramachandra. It happened on the 9th of Chaitra. So that day is called Rama Navami. It comes in April.

He lived like a common man and did not take supernatural powers in his control to decimate adversities even when pitted against worst of conditions. His was to show to man how to be feet-firm-on-ground, to brim the mind with ideals when the head reeled with obligations. He was the embodiment of popularity, bravery, kindness, justice, obedience, intelligence, patience, love, and of being dutiful. His popularity is exemplified in every walk of Indian life. His is the most widely given name to children. There are Rams in all communities of the Hindu Society. Among labourers, tribals and road side dwellers there are Rams.

Whether a goldsmith, a barber or a noble prize winning scientist, all are equally proud of being called Raman or Ram. Another name of his spouse, Janaki, affectionately called as Janu can be heard among the tribal communities. His name is the strongest mantra. Singing the bhajans of his name the Mahathma led the country to freedom. That is the power of Ram Nam. Like the National Anthem and the National song we have a National Bhajan which abounds in Ram Nam.

Compared to other incarnations and forms of God Ram has fewer pratishthas or temples. But every Hindu has consecrated him in his mind. Swami Vivekananda was right to say, "Where there are four Hindus, there is Ram". A Saint has aptly juxtaposed the statement when he said "Where there is Ram Nam, Hindus are there".

Tulsidas, a Saint who lived in the 16th century reinterpreted Valmiki in Hindi. That poetic and musical work became the source of devotion, solace and wisdom for the whole of North India. These verses echo from every mouth and if you commit a minor mistake in chanting, anyone near you will correct you. This incredible influence of Ram on Indian life explains that it is attributes and not appearance what are worshipped in idols.

The lessons of forbearance and of restraint to maintain social amity taught by Ram and inculcated by Ramayana is innate in Hindus was proved recently when an act of sacrilege of the holy book was handled adeptly by them. Similar is the Ayodhya issue. It is ironical that a place name of which means "Place of no war" (or) "place of peace" is a bone of contention. Let us hope the birth place of Ram will soon become the beacon of peace for the whole country and the herald of glory of the future India.

We wish our readers a happy Rama Navami.

A BIRD'S - EYE VIEW OF VIVEKANANDA KENDRA ACTIVITIES

HYDERABAD

Vasantha Panchami Saraswati Pooja was celebrated on February 6th. Many devotees attended the Pooja. A get-together of students who attended the Sankalpa Shibir, belonging to two colleges was conducted on 11th and 23rd February. The students shared their experiences with the Lectures and fellow students in the meeting.

GWALIOR

A workshop for students to face the exams confidently was organized from January 31st to February 22nd. Named as "Pareeksha Dein Haste-Haste" the workshop was inaugurated by Dr. Badriprasad Purohit, Social Worker and Co-ordinator, Arogyadham. Yoga exercises to improve concentration and memory power was also taught in the workshop. About 100 students from different schools participated in this workshop.

On February 16, 1000 students from the city performed "Surya Namaskar" on the occasion of Shri Shiv Samarth Gau Seva Math's centenary year. Jai Bhan Singh Pavaiya. Member of Parliament and Swami Swaroopanandji, Ramakrishna Ashram blessed the students.

Yoga Satras were organized in Saraswati Nagar, Joha Mandi and Chitniski Goot. Around 80 people participated in these satras. The Saraswati Nagar Satra turned into a regular Yoga Varga. Smt. Gayathri Murthy arranged the training and Girish Pal, Rajat Chakraborty and Ajay Sharmaji took the training responsibility.

Sri Ramakrishna Jayanthi was marked by the inauguration of Bal Sanskar Varga at Morena. Shri Mukul Kanitkar inaugurated the varga and it was organized by Shri Upamanyu. About 73 students participated in this varga, which was regularized as a weekly activity.

RAMA AND RAMANUJA

Dr. V.V. RAMANUJAN

The great Epic Sri Ramayana which tells the story of Sri Rama, an incarnation of Mahavishnu is talked of in the Puranas as the Veda itself. The Veda is commonly accepted as the supreme scriptural authority.

*Veda vedye para pumsi
jate Dasaratatmaje
Vedah prajetasatasit
sakshat Ramayanatmane.*

When the Supreme Person, the very subject matter of the Veda was born as the son of King Dasaratha the Veda itself was born from Sage Valmiki as Sri Ramayana. We accept the scriptural authority of the Ramayana of Valmiki as equal to the Veda. Brahma the creator appeared in person before Valmiki and asked him to write the story in verse form telling him that all in the incidents without any exception would appear before his mind.

Emperor Dasaratha was childless for a very long time and he performed a Vedic sacrifice called Putrakameshti so that he may be blessed with a son. At the conclusion of the

yaga a divine person appeared from the sacrificial fire with a golden pot containing divine payasam. The king received it eagerly and distributed it among his three queens. They consumed it and became pregnant. Queen Kausalya gave birth to Rama, Kaikeyi to Bharata and Sumitra to the twins Lakshmana and Satrugna. So the Supreme was born in four forms, Rama and his brothers, as sons of Dasaratha.

That Rama is an incarnation of Mahavishnu is revealed at the beginning of the epic and more forcefully by Brahma himself who tells Rama after the death of the wicked king Ravana, "Bhavan Narayano Devah," "Seeta Lakshmi Bhavan Vishnu" -You are verily the great Deva Narayana; Yes -you are Vishnu and Devi Sita is Mahalakshmi born as humans.

Rama and his brothers were brought up as Royal princes, well learned in the Vedic literature, statecraft and the martial arts. Rama tells Brahma before being told that

he was Narayana, “*Aatmanam manusham manye Ramam Dasaratatmajam*” –I consider myself as a human being, the son of King Dasaratha. Throughout the epic the four brothers and Sita do not show out their divinity but behave as ordinary human beings.

Valmiki states that the Lord was born “*Kritvatmanam chaturvidam*” in four forms. Why? The purpose for incarnations is revealed by Sri Krishna in the Bhagavad Gita thus:

*Paritranaaya sadhunam
vinasayacha dushkruta
Dharma samsthapanarthaya
sambhavami yuge yuge.*

For the protection of the good and for the destruction of evil doers, and for the firm establishment of Dharma, I am born from age to age.

Who are these ‘good’ whom He protects? They are those who are devoted to Vedic Dharma, more importantly devoted to Him. The protection is by affording them opportunities to see His most adorable form and talk about His loveable and admirable auspicious qualities. The destruction of evil is a must and He chooses to attend to this personally. More important is the establishment of Dharma.

Rama was the very embodiment of Dharma –righteous conduct. “*Ramo vighrahavandharamh*” says the poet. These words come out of the mouth of the demon Maricha.

One may wonder why in this incarnation the Lord appeared in four forms while in others He appeared only in one form. We see the practice of Dharma in different forms by the brothers.

Rama is the ideal hero, the perfect man, the ideal son, brother, and friend of sadhus. The citizens of Ayodhya are all praise for him and they tell Dasaratha their eagerness to see Rama crowned as the Yuvaraja. He is overjoyed when there is joyousness in a family. He is extremely distressed to see somebody in distress. He speaks gently and he is the first to speak. He is grateful for even small friendly acts and unmindful of unfriendly acts even if many. He is easily accessible to the subjects and mixes freely with even the very lowly. He is ever ready to carry out the words of elders. The list is endless. A few incidents:

When the king sends Rama and Lakshmana with Sage Viswamitra to protect his yaga

from defilement by the rakshasas, he tells the sage: “Oh Tiger among sages! Here we are your servants; command us as you please. We are ready to carry out your bidding.” And he kills the demoness Tataka as bid by the sage though killing a woman is highly repugnant to him.

The king tells Rama his intention to crown him as Yuvaraja and asks him to perform the preliminary rituals. Rama gladly does these with Sita by his side, but the next morning he is told that he is banished from the Kingdom for no apparent reason. He is to go and live in the forest for fourteen years. He accepts this order with joy and shows absolutely no resentment. That is the respect he gives to the words of his father, though actually it did not come from the father himself but through Kaikeyi. There are more such incidents.

Another Dharma which Rama teaches in practice is the protection he affords to those who sought it under different circumstances. He is rightly called “*Saranagatha vatsala.*” There are quite a number of instances. When Rama accepted the order of

banishment Lakshmana wanted to accompany him out of intense love for his brother and the love-driven service which he wanted to render. Rama does not readily agree to the proposal. Lakshmana resorts to saranagati.

*Sabhratu’s saranam gadham
nepeedya raghunandanah
Seethamuvachathiyasa
Raghavanacha mahavratam.*

Tightly holding the feet of his brother, Lakshmana addressed Sita and Rama and prayed that he may be allowed to accompany them. Bharata also resorts to this in the forest to bring Rama back to the Kingdom. We will come to this later.

The saranagati of Vibhishana, Ravana’s younger brother is well known and is often dwelt upon by scholars in the Ramayana. Rama’s allies Sugreeva and his associates object very strongly to admitting a bitter enemy’s brother into their camp. But Rama is determined in keeping the vow of affording protection to all who seek the same. He tells the monkey king,
*Sakrudeva prapannaya
tavasmiticha yachate
Abhayam sarvabhutebyo dadami
etat vratam mama.*

To any being who say once (only) “I am yours –protect me,” I afford him fearlessness from any other being in this world. This my unchangeable vow. He also says, “I will accept any hand of friendship whatever may the shortcoming of the person.” He convinces his friends and sends Sugreeva to fetch Vibhishana with the words;

*Anayainam harishsreshta
dattamasyaabhayam maya
Vibhishano va Sugreeva! Yadiva
Ravanaswayam.*

O Sugreeva! Go and fetch Vibhishana to our midst. I have promised protection. Don’t worry even if it is Ravana himself who has come.” Later Sugreeva admits (“*mamapyantaratmavai sudham vetmi Vibhishanam.*”) ‘My inner consciousness also admits the purity of Vibhishana.’

The Lord was born in four forms to protect Dharma in four ways. The role of Rama has been dealt with at some length. His extraordinary friendship with the hunter chieftain Guha (*Ramasya atmanassakha*), with Sabari, with Jataayu, the vulture whose body Rama cremates with all honours, with the monkeys show out his *soulabhya* (easy accessibility)

and *sowseelya* (mixing easily with those far inferior to him) are all to be dwelt upon for hours at end. So also is his love for Sita and the deep concern he shows for her. In fact, the Ramayana is ‘*Seethayas Charitam mahat*’ in the words of Valmiki himself.

We will briefly dwell upon the greatness of the other three of the brothers. Remember that the four brothers were born in the course of just two successive days –the time gap being a matter of hours. But they all show the greatest veneration, love and affection to Rama as their elder brother who is to them more than Dasaratha himself. We find an orientation among the brothers - Lakshmana’s deep devotion to Rama and Satrugna’s to Bharata. Bharata’s devotion and veneration for Rama is no doubt great.

Though the younger brothers were also aspects of Vishnu, the Dharma they project is that of a jivatma in relation to the Supreme. The jivatma (individual Soul) is solely the possession of the Supreme represented by Rama in this epic. The essential nature (swaroopa) of the jiva is ‘*seshatva*’ –being of service to

the master and ‘*paratantrya*’ – total submission to the will of the master to be used as he pleases.

Lakshmana is a personification of devotion and service to his brother. When Rama asks him to stay in Ayodhya and look after the mothers and the aged king, he flatly refuses –an act totally against his very nature. Valmiki says this of Lakshmana. “*Lakshmano lakshmisampanno bahihpranaivaparah*” Lakshmana’s immense wealth was his service to his elder brother. He was Rama’s very soul only outside the body. When the order of banishment was conveyed to Rama, Lakshmana disowns his father and declares that Rama is his father and master. Taking hold of Rama’s feet he asks, ‘*Rurushva mam anucharam vaidharmyam nehavidyate.*’ Make me your follower (into the forest), there is no travesty of Dharma here. He means “I do not have any sin which would separate me from you.” He declares his life’s sole aim thus;

*Bhavamsthu saha vaidehya
girisanushu ramsyase
Aham sarvam karishyami
jagrataswapadaschate.*

‘When you sport with Sita for pleasure in the hills and valleys I will do everything. I will serve you when you are asleep or wakeful.’ The expression ‘*Karishyami*’ emphasises that the service is for the sole pleasure of the beneficiary. It is not the formal “I am glad to be of service –the pleasure is mine.”

On another occasion he declares his true nature: ‘*Paravanasmi Kakutstakriyatamiti mam vada*’ O Rama, I am totally yours. Command me what is to be done. His devotion and veneration towards Sita was also total. On an occasion after her abduction by Ravana, Rama comes by the abandoned jewels worn by her. When asked to identify them, Lakshmana says, “I have no knowledge of the identity of her ear-rings or necklaces, but I can easily identify her anklets worn on the feet because of daily prostration at the feet. Rama was equally if not more, devoted to his brother.

Bharatha and Satrugna were away in Kekeyarajya when Dasaratha planned Rama’s coronation and then submits to Rama’s being banished as a result of Kaikeyi’s intrigue. The

King dies in grief. Bharatha is summoned back in haste, and when his mother Kaikeyi tells him that he is the King of Ayodhya, he falls down smitten and reviles his mother in rage.

He even rebukes the venerable Vasishtha in open court for the injustice done to Rama and also to him. He says (“*Rajyamcha ahamcha Ramasya –Dharmam vaktumiharhasi*”) Both the Kingdom and I are Rama’s. You should render justice. The idea is that if one possession could rule the other why not let the Kingdom rule Bharata? He would never accept the kingship whatever may be the justification others may offer. He retires to the forest not alone, but accompanied by the queens, the ministers, purohiths and even part of the army. He falls at the feet of Rama and begs him to return to Ayodhya and assume kingship.

Here the saranagati appears to be in vain. Rama is unrelenting in his vow to remain in the forest for full fourteen years as ordered by their father. But he makes this concession to his devoted brother. He tells him “Rule the Kingdom as my representative till I come back and accept the

kingship.” Rama agrees to give his sandals to be installed in the king’s palace. Bharata feels satisfied and to some extent happy at this arrangement. Bharata shines as a model of paratantra. He accepts Rama’s will as supreme though unpalatable for himself. He leads an ascetic life for fourteen years outside the capital city and is fully happy only on handing over the kingship later to the rightful heir.

Satrugna projects the highest Dharma that true subservience to the Lord is being subservient to His devotees. To him Bharata is dearer than Rama himself. The poet says of him when he leaves for the Kekeya with Bharata: ‘*Satrugno nityasatrughnah neetah preetipuraskritah nitya satrughnah*’ –everlasting conqueror of foes; his foe was Rama’s charm and duty by the eldest brother which could hinder service to Bharata.

Ramanuja in the title stands for Rama’s younger brothers. I like to stop here without even a word about Sita, Hanuman and others devoted to Sri Rama.

(The author is the Editor of the **Yathiraja Paduka**, published from Triplicane)

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